

 <b>VERMONT</b> DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<b>75</b>
Chapter:	Working with Families	
Subject:	Normalcy and the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS)	Page 1 of 7
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## Purpose

To provide guidance to division staff about promoting normalcy for children and youth in DCF custody, and to provide guidance for caregivers about applying the reasonable and prudent parent standard (RPPS).

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## Related Policies

Family Services [Policy 72](#): Educational Achievement and Stability for Children and Youth in DCF Custody

Family Services [Policy 76](#): Supporting and Affirming LGBTQ Children & Youth

## Introduction

[The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act](#) of 2014 ([PL 113–183](#)) requires child welfare agencies to promote normalcy and well-being for children and youth in foster care. [PL 113–183](#) also requires child welfare agencies to implement a reasonable and prudent parent standard (RPPS), whereby permission for normal, day-to-day activities and events shifts from division staff to caregivers.

## Definitions

***Age or Developmentally Appropriate***: Activities or items that are:

- (a) generally accepted as being suitable for children of the same chronological age or level of maturity or that are determined to be developmentally appropriate for a child, based on the development of cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities that are typical for an age or age group; and
- (b) in the case of a specific child, activities or items that are suitable for the child based on the developmental stages attained by the child with respect to the cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities of the child.

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**Caregiver:** The resource parent or foster parent, including kinship foster parents, residential treatment programs, or other programs with whom the child or youth in DCF custody has been placed.

**Normalcy:** Allowing children and youth in out-of-home care to experience childhood and adolescence in ways like their peers not in foster care. This includes opportunities to participate in activities and experiences such as:

- After-school clubs and sports;
- Recreational and community activities;
- School field trips;
- Sleepovers;
- Part-time jobs or summer employment;
- Driver’s education;
- Choice in personal style and expression;
- Cultural and religious practices and expression;
- Access to cell phones, computer usage, and social media;
- Reasonable curfews; and
- Reasonable rules regarding dating and socializing with peers.

**Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS):** A standard characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a child or youth in foster care, while at the same time encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the child, that a caregiver must use when determining whether to allow a child in foster care to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities.

## Policy

Caregivers are authorized to provide or withhold permission without prior approval of the social worker or other division staff to allow a child or youth in their care to participate in normal childhood activities and events based on the reasonable and prudent parent standard (RPPS). Caregivers may approve or disapprove activities independently without the division’s explicit permission unless the activity:

- (1) conflicts with a safety plan, treatment plan, case plan, or court order; OR
- (2) last more than 72 hours.

Consultation with DCF-FSD staff is encouraged for decisions where the parent’s and caregiver’s opinions differ. See Appendix I for additional information and guidance.

## Appendix I: Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS) Caregiver Guidelines

<b>Child &amp; Youth Activity Category</b>	<b>GREEN</b> – Examples of childhood activities that are generally considered normal which caregivers/resource families can <b>approve or disapprove</b> independently without DCF-FSD’s explicit permission	<b>RED</b> – Examples of childhood activities DCF-FSD must discuss with caregivers/resource families, approve, or obtain a court order
<i>DCF-FSD approval is needed for any events or activities that (1) conflict with a safety plan, treatment plan, case plan, or court order OR (2) last more than 72 hours. Consultation with DCF-FSD staff is encouraged for decisions where the parent’s and caregiver’s opinions differ.</i>		
<b>Recreation Activities</b>	<p>Children/youth and caregivers must comply with all laws and use appropriate protective/safety gear (helmet, life jacket, harness, pads, etc.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community events</li> <li>• Cultural events</li> <li>• Family events</li> <li>• Movies</li> <li>• Playing in a public park or on a playground</li> <li>• Health and fitness-related activities (gym, weightlifting, yoga, etc.)</li> <li>• Camping</li> <li>• Fishing</li> <li>• Hiking</li> <li>• Biking</li> <li>• Rock climbing</li> <li>• Karate</li> <li>• Horseback riding</li> <li>• Ice-skating</li> <li>• Skiing</li> <li>• Snowboarding</li> <li>• Hockey</li> <li>• Swimming</li> <li>• Diving</li> <li>• Snorkeling</li> <li>• River tubing</li> <li>• River rafting</li> <li>• Kayaking</li> <li>• Paddle boarding</li> <li>• Other sporting activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any events or activities that conflict with a safety plan, treatment plan, case plan, or court order</li> <li>• Any events or activities lasting more than 72 hours</li> </ul>
<b>Social &amp; Extracurricular Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camps</li> <li>• Field trips</li> <li>• School dances</li> <li>• Prom and post-prom activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any events or activities that conflict with a safety plan, treatment plan, case plan, or court order</li> <li>• Any events or activities lasting more than 72 hours</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Band or orchestra</li> <li>• After-school clubs</li> <li>• Other school-related activities (art, drama, chorus, dance classes, etc.)</li> <li>• Sports activities (football, basketball, baseball, soccer, wrestling, hockey, track and field, golf, volleyball, cheerleading, lacrosse, etc.)</li> <li>• Amusement parks and waterparks</li> <li>• Youth Development Program (YDP) activities</li> <li>• Social activities with peers</li> <li>• Spending the night away from the caregiver's home at a friend's house</li> <li>• Having a friend over to spend the night</li> <li>• Dating</li> </ul>	
<b>Religious, Cultural, &amp; Tribal Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend religious services of the child or youth's choice</li> <li>• Participate in church, mosque, synagogue, temple, or other place of worship activities</li> <li>• Participate in cultural activities and events</li> <li>• Participate in tribal activities and events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instances where the child/youth and parent's opinions are in conflict</li> <li>• Any events or activities lasting more than 72 hours</li> </ul>
<b>Travel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All travel within the United States and Canada lasting less than 72 hours</li> <li>• Taking public transportation alone or with peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All travel lasting more than 72 hours</li> <li>• All out-of-country travel (excluding Canada)</li> <li>• Any travel that conflict with a safety plan, treatment plan, case plan, or court order</li> </ul>
<b>Employment (in accordance with state and federal laws)</b>	<p>Youth 14 years and older should be encouraged to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek an internship opportunity</li> <li>• Interview for employment</li> <li>• Obtain employment if it does not interfere with school</li> </ul> <p>Other employment activities for children and youth under 14 may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job shadowing experiences</li> <li>• Internship opportunities</li> <li>• Babysitting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children/youth under 14 years old are not legally permitted to work</li> </ul>
<b>Babysitting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enroll and participate in online or in-person babysitting classes offered by the <a href="#">American Red Cross</a> or other reputable organization.</li> <li>• If developmentally appropriate and determined to be safe, youth age 11 and older in DCF custody may babysit other children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children/youth with sexually harmful behaviors are not permitted to babysit</li> <li>• Children/youth in DCF custody are not permitted to babysit other children in DCF custody</li> <li>• Social worker approval is required for siblings to babysit other siblings in DCF custody</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children/youth may not babysit if this conflicts with a safety plan, treatment plan, case plan, or court order</li> </ul>
<p><b>Motorized Activities</b></p>	<p>Children/youth and caregivers must comply with all laws, take required safety courses, and use appropriate protective/safety gear. See the <a href="#">Vermont ATV Manual</a>, the <a href="#">Vermont Snowmobile Regulations</a>, the <a href="#">Handbook of Vermont Boating Laws and Responsibilities</a>, <a href="#">Vermont's Legal Requirements for Boating</a>, and the <a href="#">Official Vermont Boating Safety Course Online</a> for additional information.</p> <p>Children/youth <b>riding</b> in a motorized vehicle with an adult, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snowmobiles</li> <li>• All-terrain vehicles (ATV)</li> <li>• Dirt bikes</li> <li>• Go-karts</li> <li>• Jet skis</li> <li>• Boats</li> </ul> <p>Youth 12 years and older <b>operating</b> motorized equipment/vehicles under the direct supervision of a legal adult and following the appropriate safety guidance, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snowmobile</li> <li>• All-terrain vehicles (ATV)</li> <li>• Dirt bikes</li> <li>• Go-karts</li> <li>• Jet skis</li> <li>• Boats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children under 12 years old are not legally permitted to operate motorized equipment or vehicles</li> <li>• Any activities that conflict with a safety plan, treatment plan, case plan, or court order</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lawn &amp; Farm Equipment</b></p>	<p>Children/youth and caregivers must comply with all laws and use appropriate protective/safety gear. See the American Academy of Pediatrics <a href="#">Lawn Mower Safety Recommendations</a>.</p> <p><i>Lawn Equipment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operate a walk-behind power mower or hand mower if 12 years or older</li> <li>• Operate a riding lawn mower if 16 years or older</li> <li>• Operate a brush cutter (also known as trimmer mowers or weed whackers) if 16 years or older</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All operation or use of tractors or other farm equipment</li> <li>• Any activities that conflict with a safety plan, treatment plan, case plan, or court order</li> </ul>

	<p><i>Farm Equipment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grant approval for youth to enroll in a tractor safety course if 14 years or older</li> </ul>	
<b>Driving</b>	<p>Youth under 18 years old are required to complete the following phases of the <a href="#">Vermont GDL Program</a> if they would like to obtain a driver's license:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Driver's education course</li> <li>Learner's permit (15 years old)</li> <li>Junior driver's license (16 years old)</li> <li>Senior driver's license (18 years old)</li> </ul> <p>Other activities related to driving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ride in a car with a friend who has a senior driver's license or junior driver's license for at least 6 months</li> <li>Ride in a car with an adult, such as a friend's parent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any activities that conflict with a safety plan, treatment plan, case plan, or court order</li> </ul>
<b>Hunting &amp; Activities Involving Firearms</b>	<p>Children/youth and caregivers must follow the Vermont Fish &amp; Wildlife Department's <a href="#">statutes and regulations</a> and take appropriate safety measures. Firearms must be stored in accordance with the <a href="#">Licensing Regulations for Foster Homes in Vermont</a> (#407).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grant approval for children/youth to take online hunter education courses</li> <li>Enroll youth ages 12 and older (at a sixth-grade reading level) in the in-person hunter education course, bowhunter education course, or combined class through the Vermont Fish &amp; Wildlife Department</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Obtain/purchase a hunting license</li> <li>Hunting with a gun or bow</li> <li>Archery</li> <li>Target shooting</li> <li>Any activities involving weapons that conflict with a safety plan, treatment plan, case plan, or court order</li> </ul>
<b>Personal Style &amp; Appearance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temporarily alter one's appearance (haircut, hairstyle, hair dye, henna tattoo, temporary tattoo, etc.)</li> <li>Wearing gender affirming hairstyles, clothing, and accessories</li> <li>Wearing contact lenses or glasses</li> <li>Wearing makeup and perfume or cologne, and getting manicures or pedicures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children/youth in DCF custody are not permitted to use tanning beds</li> <li>Permanently alter one's appearance (piercings, gauges, tattoos, etc.)</li> <li>Instances where the child/youth and parent's opinions are in conflict</li> <li>Instances where the foster parent and parent's opinions are in conflict</li> </ul>
<b>Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have social media accounts with appropriate monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Own a cell phone</li> <li>Technology access which conflicts with a safety plan, treatment plan, case plan, or court order</li> </ul>

<p><b>Privileges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a photo of the child/youth appear in a newspaper if the young person is not identified as a “foster child” or in “DCF custody”</li> <li>• Receiving a personal allowance</li> <li>• Open and maintain a bank account</li> <li>• Have magazine subscriptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photos of children/youth in DCF custody for brochures or advertising purposes are <b>NOT</b> permitted</li> <li>• Privileges that conflict with a safety plan, treatment plan, case plan, or court order</li> </ul>
<p><b>Privacy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to have private conversations</li> <li>• Bedroom and bathroom privacy</li> <li>• Have private conversations with doctors and other medical professionals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Privacy which conflicts with a safety plan, treatment plan, case plan, or court order</li> </ul>
<p><b>Health &amp; Wellness</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide input into medication management, or administer medication on one’s own</li> </ul> <p>*** Per Vermont law, children and youth of <b>any age</b> are permitted to seek reproductive health services and obtain birth control or abortions on their own without parent/guardian or partner permission. ***</p> <p>*** Effective 1/1/2018 per <a href="#">Vermont Act 35</a>, minors may give consent to receive any legally authorized outpatient treatment (psychotherapy and other counseling services that are supportive, but not prescription drugs) from a mental health professional without the consent of a parent or legal guardian. ***</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DCF-FSD oversight is required for all psychotropic medications</li> <li>• When a young person seeks mental health treatment without the consent of a parent or legal guardian and DCF-FSD staff or caregivers would like to receive information about their treatment or progress, <b>the youth’s consent is required</b> for a mental health professional to share information with anyone.</li> </ul>